वाङ्मयी

(विभागीयशोधपत्रिका)

अङ्कः ५ अब्दः १९९७

पावका नः सरस्वती

शोधविमर्शगोष्ठी
संस्कृतप्राकृतभाषाविभागः
लखनऊ-विश्वविद्यालयः
लक्ष्मणपुरम्

RE-ACCESSING ABHINAVAGUPTA

Navjivan Rastogi

Some twenty five years ago I wrote an article on the contribution of Kashmir to Indian Philosophy, thought and culture.[1] An effort was made, in that paper, to highlight the fact that the cultural history of India would ever remain incomplete if it fails to take into consideration the enormous contribution made by Kashmir in practically all areas of Indian Culture and all realms of Indological studies.[2] Today (when we sit again to reappraise the whole scenario) we find Abhinavagupta emerging as the single most potential and creative factor in the centre of total Kashmirian contribution to the history of Indian metaphysical speculation and as one of the most potent sources of the Indian contribution to the world thought.

Tradition has its own way of appraising such epoch making personalities. Abhinavagupta was hailed as an incarnation of Śeṣanāga[3], as the Patañjali-incarnate[4], as a worldly embodiment of the Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti i.e. Śiva[5], as the progeny of the parents established in the divine essence of Bhairava[6], (i.e., *Yoginībhū*) as the person initiated by his own deified awareness[7] and as a scholar whose name alone spelt authentic authoritativeness[8]. In fact, from all available data, Abhinavagupta was not his real name but a title earned by him from his teachers in recognition of his outstanding intellectual and spiritual accomplishments[9].

All these descriptions may however be dismissed by a modern student as being purely holistic and eulogistic in content. It will, therefore, be necessary for us to demonstrate the factum of these statements and in the process to re-discover and reassess the personality, contribution and contemporary meaningfulness of Abhinavagupta. It has become imperative for two reasons. There is one more reason for those who belong or shall belong to the University of Lucknow. I begin with the last one.

Few will believe that our acquaintance with Abhinavagupta is a very recent phenomenon of Indological history. With Bühler's report on his tour in search of manuscripts, published in 1877, we came to know the name of some works by Abhinavagupta followed by a few publications by Nirnaya Sāgar Press of Bombay and the Research & Publication Department of the Kāshmīr Durbār between 1890 to 1911 and a lot more by the latter during 1912 to 1925. (It must be noted that Abhinavagupta's major works such as, the ***Dhvanyāloka-locana, Abhinava-bhāratī***, several volumes of the ***Tantrāloka*** and ***Īśvara-pratyabhijñā vivṛti-vimarśinī*** still had not seen the light of the day. Their publication went upto 1943). So our familiarity with Abhinavagupta

remained superficial and skin deep throughout this period. During 1925-1935, however, an incident, replete with historical consequences, took place in the Lucknow University and a young scholar undertook study of Abhinavagupta and published the results of his sustained hardwork in 1935 under the title ***Abhinavagupta : An Historical & Philosophical Study*** unconsciously bringing the Department of Sanskrit on the international platform and opening the floodgates of an Indological discipline of vast proportions and immense possibilities. This study was supplemented by the publication of the ***comparative Aesthetics*** in two volumes during the subsequent decade extending the horizons of our knowledge and deepening our understanding of Abhinavagupta's potential. This scholar was none else than Dr. K.C.Pandey who later founded "Abhinavagupta Institute of Aesthetics & Śaiva Philosophy" at Lucknow University after his retirement. Interesting as it may sound towards the initial phase Dr. Pandey was joined by Prof. K.S. Iyer in his studies of Abhinavagupta. Both of them jointly edited an unknown commentary called ***Bhāskarī*** on Abhinavagupta's ***Īśvara-pratyabhijñā vimarśini.*** It is a sheer coincidence that while we celebrated the centenary of Prof. Iyer last year, we are going to celebrate the centenary of this savant of Abhinavan thought in the coming year. This spells out our immediate concern for refurbishing our understanding of Abhinavagupta. In our considered opinion this will be the fittest tribute to this doyen of Abhinavan studies. Our second concern for reappraising Abhinavagupta is rooted in the general survey of the contemporary Indological scene the world over. During the last fifty years a gradual, but increasingly accelerated, shift is descernible in the focal areas of interest of transnational Indological scholarship - from Vedas, Linguistics and Philosophy to Buddhism, Tantras and Abhinavagupta. The last one occupies centre-stage because of the path shown by Pandey in the first place and because of the multinational craze to explore the unfathomed intellectual depths of Abhinavan thought in the second. In the stark contrast, back home, the studies on Abhinavagupt have slackened and classics like Pandey's ***Abhinavagupta*** and ***Comparative Aesthetics,*** Shankar Chaitanya Bhāratī's ***Darśanasarvasva*** and Kalidas Bhattacharya's ***Gopinath Kavirāj's Thoughts-Towards a systematic study*** are gradually, but conspicuously, becoming a rarity. The Lucknow University did produce a few good studies in the cognate areas but with the exit of second generation scholarship, this too is likely to wither away soon. It calls for an immediate in-depth analysis of the reasons for the creeping loss of interest in Abhinavagupta. One may be confronted with the mushrooming of literature on Abhinavagupta in India in order to belie the above contention, but a closer look does not fail to tear apart the deceptive veneer that covers the so-called studies. One reason may be that over these years we have failed to generate supportive tools and adequate ground work necessary for sustained deepening of our insight into Abhinavan thought.

Our third concern flows from the second. Besides Pandey at Lucknow, there were quite a few other centres of spirituo-academic activity totally dedicated to the pursuit of Abhinavan thought, namely Gopīnāth Kavirāj, Lakshman joo, Jai Shankar Prasād, S.K.Dās, Amrit Vāgbhava closely followed by R.K.kaw, Jaidev Singh and B.N. Pandit. With the exit of all these scholars except the last one, the serious studies on Abhinavagupta on the home front are almost extinct and there is every danger of loosing our moorings in the field of serious investigations in the area. Chances are that we might even loose our identity when viewed against the global backdrop. Because in the West as well an in the Far East, strong centres of deep academic interest synchronizing with the currents of neo-spiritualism have surfaced churning out first class studies on the different aspects of Abhinavan thought. France, Oxford, USA, Italy, Maxico, Japan inter alia have produced remarkable works in this special area. With the ever-growing appetite outside India for exploring Abhinavagupta more and more, our complacence may prove suicidal and self effacing in a field which was pioneered and nurtured here. This explains urgent need for reappraising our academic priorities and reassessing the potential of Abhinavagupta.

By whatever method or in whatever way we may access Abhinavagupta as a philosopher, aesthetician, art-critic, dramaturgist, tantric sādhaka, yogin, master of performing arts, metaphysician, devotee, researcher, historiographer, author, editor, commentator - all his pursuits are characterized by one common mission : they are palm-bearers of a unified essence. He defines his vision as non-dualism (advayavāda) *'Adavaya'* to him means fullness, harmony and integrality *(pūrṇatā, sāmarasya and sāmastya)*. Though conveying different connotations all the three terms stand for a single denotee clearly underlining the fact that the changing universe of discourse and the fleeting variety of the phenomena are nothing but the real manifestations of a single essence which for want of a better English equivalent may be rendered as self referential awareness. The fullness, and for that matter, the hormony and the integrality lie in exploring the real identity between the phenomena and the ultimate unitary essence. This identity is realized not through the mechanism of a logically constructed superimposed entity but through the dynamism of the Reality's inherent agency. This unified essence, as a sequel, refuses to remain a mere simple unity but a unity, a unified essence, filled by a rich self-unfolding content. While this presentation describes Abhinavagupta's philosphy, it also sums up his personality because his personality is a living realization of his vision. His is a total yet constantly and consistently unfolding personal identity.

If this be the tenable assessment, the enigmatically multi-dimensional personality of Abhinavagupta must cease to baffle us. In its own characteristic manner analogy of a *purusa* (person) is quite often resorted to in Indian parlance to lend a semblance of life

and to inject an element of wholeness into the idea by personifying the same. Like *kāvya puruṣa or vedapuruṣa*, Abhinavagupta may be conceived as *prajñā-puruṣa* embodying the essential features of Sarasvati and *Naṭarāja* fused into one. The very notion of *prajñā puruṣa* symbolizes the attempt to visualize knowledge as a 'whole' *(avayavin)* that is to adopt an integrated approach to knowledge. Abhinavagupta's whole personality is thus structured as an encyclopaedic thinker who not only displays an encyclopaedic fervour in whatever he touches, but he in the process also emerges as a nodal point where almost all the streams of Indological studies tend to converge. Let us see how.

Abhnavagupta appears as the tallest intellectual figure of medieval India by virtue of his all- encompassing genius. Beginning on the basis of relatively more known facts, Abhinavaguptas's first impression is that of a philosopher. Generally we know him as a first rate metaphysical thinker of the Kashmir Shaivism. The Kashmir Shaivism literally stands for all the off-shoots of Śaiva and Śākta speculation that grew or got matured in the valley. The modern usage of the term, however, has a slightly restrictive signification. The term now represents a sort of loose conglomerate of all monistic strands of thought pertaining to Śaiva-Śākta combine, the pratyabhijñā and Trika Schools being the main and most popularly known systems. Remarkable as it may sound, Abhinavagupta contributes to both the segments. Under the second segment within the realm of Pratyabhijñā the two of the five core texts[10], namely the ***Īśvarapratyabhijñā-vimarśinī*** and ***Īśvarapratyabhijñā vivṛti-vimarśinī***, are from his pen. It is a matter of pity that till this day we have not been able to critically edit the text of the **Iśvarapratyabhijñā-vivṛti-vimarśini** or translate the same in any language. it is a great scholastic work running over about 1200 finely printed pages and is comparable to the glosses of Vātsyayāna, Śabara or Śamkara in their respective systems in scholarship. In the Trika system his versicular commentary called the ***Mālinī-vijaya-vārtika*** on the ***Mālinivijayottaratantra***, the source text of the Trika system, is a path - setter text and has met with a similar fate. A critically edited text and its translation into any language has so far eluded us. In the realms of the Kula system his ***Parātriśikā-vivaraṇa*** is a work of substantial merit. In the Krama system, though his major work ***Kramakeli*** is now lost to us due to vagaries of time, his minor works such as the ***Kramastotra*** have survived the atrocities of time. He is equally famous for his immense contribution to the fields of literary criticism and aesthetics. His celebrated ***Locana*** on the ***Dhvanyāloka*** is a land-mark in the history of Sanskrit literary criticism in general and in the history of Dhvani school in particular. What is important, Abhinavagupta establishes an inner chord between literary criticism and aesthetics. His illustrious commentary ***Abhinavabhāratī*** on Bharata's ***Nāṭyaśāstra*** is a work of monumental value seminal to our current insight into the Indian aesthetics. We must be grateful to

Ramchandra Kavi who has afforded to us an edited text of ***Abhinavabhāratī***. The four volumes of this enormous text comprise about 2000 pages. Again the irony is that this work too needs critical edition and an authentic translation. Except a few sporadic efforts towards editing the ***Abhinavabhāratī*** pertaining to the ***Rāsa-sūtra***, we are ill-equipped to grapple with this gigantic text. While commenting upon the ***Nāṭya-Śāstra***, which is patently a text on dramaturgy, Abhinavagupta attempts a subtle transition from dramaturgy to aesthetics elliciting support from his master Bharata himself who views drama as the primary art - form and the other art-forms such as music, dance, sculpture and architecture being subordinate. Besides, by strongly substantiating the role of *vyañjanā* as a vehicle of transmission of art - experience in the ***Locana*** and by advocating the immediacy of art-experience being common to poetry and drama he demolishes the divider between poetry and drama and this paves his way for smooth and purposeful foray into the realm of fine arts. In the field of Tantra perhaps there is none to match his standing in the entire history. His magnum opus ***Tantrāloka*** which alongwith Jayaratha's commentary ***Viveka*** covers about 12 volumes extending over 3500 pages, is a text of matchless genre. Though purporting to be a commentary on the ***Mālinīvijayottara-tantra*** the work remains thoroughly original in content, design and treatment. The work by itself is an enclyclopaedia of the tantric literature, ritual and praxis. This work too, though translated into Italian by Gnoli and being translated into Hindi by Parama Hans Misra, needs a critico-textually edited text. I want to put this point across with a sense of added responsibility because of my personal association with the text by way of bringing out an enlarged edition and also attempting a sizable introductory study. This text was later summarised by Abhinavagupta himself into growingly smaller avataras e.g., ***Tantrasāra, Tantroccaya*** and ***Tantravaṭadhānikā***. Toeing the traditional Indian line, Abhinavagupta is not satisfied with his forays into the realm of knowledge and spirituality (*Jñāna*), he is equally determined to make deep strides in the paths of devotion (*bhakti*) and action (*Kriyā/Yoga*). While he views all his works as constituting homage to the Divine (stuti) he has written several devotional poems (*stotras*)[11] as well, in which he pours his heart underscoring his roots in the tradition presided over by Bhaṭṭa nārāyāṇa and his own grand teacher Utapala. Despite the descent of any specific text on yoga from his pen till date, it does not deter us from having a peep into his unique brand of yoga. His deep insight into ānanda-yoga a term coined by him to mark his own approach, is abundantly noticeable in the ***Mālinīvijaya-vārtika, Tantrāloka*** and ***Parātrīśikā-vivaraṇa***. In addition, Abhinavagupta distinguishes himself from the general tenor of Indian philosophers. Here he finds himself in the coveted company of a great philosopher like Bhartṛhari. While the whole of Indian philosophy treats reality as 'meaning' (*artha*) or 'meaning of word' (*padārtha*), the entire monistic śiva tradition of Kashmir perceives reality as 'word' (*śabda*) also. To

be accurate, reality is a synthesis of word and meaning both. Abhinavagupta differs from Bhartṛahari in the sense that the latter views the meaning as an evolute of the word-principle. A substantial block of the Mīmāṁsists too propounds the philosophy of language taking the meaning as a priori anticipation of facts represented by the pure word. While Abhinavagupta agrees with the Mīmāṁsaka Stand, he finds pure word identical with pure awareness unlike the Mīmāṁsaka. Thus according to Abhinavagupta, objects and images are not contingent, they are self-concretizations of the pure word. Thus the linguistic evolution, like its parallel objective evolution, is a real symbol of creative process. Abhinavagupta's linguistic thesis projects him as a philosopher of language par excellence and lays bare the subtle inner linkage obtaining between his theories of word, meaning and conveyance of art-experience.

Not only the mammoth canvas betrays the extent of his encyclopaedic mind, his treatment of the subject-matter too reveals the encyclopaedic functioning of his intellect. As seen above, Abhinavan genius is integral. In fact it is not just integral; it is `integrating' also. To him, all the different disciplines he has worked on are various expressions of an underlying common essence. As he has emphatically demonstrated in the case of the ***Tantrāloka*** he views all his works - be it a work on literary criticism or a treatise on philosophy, a devotional poem or a manual of tantra - share identical structural pattern. All the texts, are designed as a compendium (*saṁgraha - grantha*), a procedure manual (*prakriyā-grantha*), a systemal text (Śāstra - grantha) and a devotional work (stuti-grantha). This fact is amply borne out by the benedictory and concluding verses of the respective works. By embracing such a structural organization he procures and preserves all the relevant information pertaining to ideas, literature and practices, followed by their organization into a systematic framework propounding the methodology to be adhered to and thereby spiritually sublimating everything as an offering to the Divine. A level below the structural fundamentalism is the next level of textual integration. For example the study of the ***Tantrāloka*** as an individual text is not advocated by Abhinavagupta. He visualizes the ***Mālinīvijaya-vārtika, Tantrāloka*** and ***Parātriśikāvivaraṇa*** as forming a consistent whole and urges the reader to approach them as complementary texts. Similarly he perceives a logical integration between the ***Locana*** and the ***Abhinavabhārati*** on the one hand and between the ***Īśvarapratyabhijñā -vimarśinī*** and the ***vivṛti-vimarśinī*** on the other and then integrating the two sets from two separate disciplines he prepares the ground for integration at a larger and higher scale. A subsequent level of integration is seen within the schematization of the subject-matter of a given text. This process is visibly at work in all the major texts such as the ***Tantrāloka***, the ***Īśvarapratyabhijñā-vimarśinī***, the ***Vivṛti-vimarśinī*** and the ***Abhinavabhārati***. In all these texts Abhinavagupta aims to

integrate vertically as well as horizontally. In the ***Tantrāloka*** by introducing the twin notions of the *tantra - prakriyā* and *Kula-prakriyās* and by subsuming all the systems under them and by interacting the two classes of systems he vertically integrates all the monistic Śaiva systems on the other hand he integrates all the Śaiva systems of non-monistic shade also as emanating from *trayambaka* and *non-trayambaka mathikās* and constituting a single progressively assimilative channel. He is then able to produce a comprehensive manual on all the tantric systems placing them in a logically co-hesive sequence. In the ***Abhinavabhāratī*** he unearths a logically ordered whole of all the theories of the *rasa* as an experience as well as an object and all the forms and variants of other art-forms and traditions and puts up a virtual store house of all previous as well as prevalent theories and practices at our disposal. In the ***Īśvarapratyabhijñā-vimarśinī*** and **Īśvarapratyabhijñā-vivṛti-vimarśinī** his integrating faculty wears a different mantle. Here he is ranked amongst the systematizers or system-builders, portrayed as *तर्कस्य कर्तारः* by Jayaratha, like Somananda and Utpala. Here he not only integrates but rationalizes, systematizes and reconstructs the loose ends into a well orchestrated cogent system of thought. It is utpala, Abhinavagupta's grand teacher Who introduces the four-fold division of the ***Pratyabhijñā-Karikās*** and integrates knowledge, action and āgama as belonging to the Supreme Subjectivity and discovers the principle of recognition as operating through each of them. Each cognitive variant and functional diversity of the subject is nothing but a recognitive mode of self-discovery. Thus rasa-experience is nothing but a recognitive mode of self-discovery through art. Meaning is nothing but a recognitive mode of self discovery through word. The list is endless.

There is one more dimension to his encyclopaedic vision. It is the historical genius and keen historical sense that is evident in all the works of Abhinavagupta. The Indian notion of beginningless time and endless worldly cycle (*anādi and ananta*) happens to be a great deterent of any historical activity in the modern sense of measurable time. Thus the rise of Kalhaṇa should be viewed as an exception not as a rule. Against this backdrop Abhinavagupta indulges in a real historical activity. He dates at least his three works in precise terms of data, month and year. Goudriaan treats Abhinavagupta as one of the three concrete sources for dating the tantric texts. Abhinavagupta's historical sense transcends beyond this. He furnishes valuable information about his ancestral and preceptorial lineages. Everywhere he tries to point out and, if feasible, to restore the missing links in the tradition. It is possible to conclusively show that Abhinavagupta utilizes the entire pre-Abhinavan source material and imparts to them a chronological order. Modern researches have authenticated the vast material in manuscripts made use by Abhinavagupta while writing his ***Tantrāloka***. A study into the source-material of the ***Tantrālok*** offers a very fascinating scope for future research. Exactly a similar

phenomenon one comes across in the ***Abhinavabhāratī***, where Abhinavagupta undertakes a stupendous task of collecting text-books, technical data, forms, variants and modes of literary, dramatic and other performing arts. As a glaring and popular example ***Abhinavabhāratī*** remains till this day our only source of knowledge on various theories and theorists of Rasa. Abhinavagupta's works offer an extremely rich source for various aspects of Indian cultural history. The ***Tantrāloka*** and ***Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-vivṛti-vimarśinī*** are replete with several informations on Buddhism, Tāntric Buddhism and other systems of Indian philosophy which are now extinct in their own respective systems. For example, sixteenth Āhnika of the ***Tantrāloka*** contains valuable information on *kālacakra*, the ***Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-vivṛti-vimarśinī*** refers to and quotes from a subsect of Buddhists called *Dharmottarīya*, about which little is known from Buddhist sources.

Bound with this is Abhinavagupta's role as an editor and an exemplary research scholar in the modern sense of the term. He subjects his data to most vigorous historical, theoretical, chronological and logical scrutiny before utilizing the material. Abhinavagupta shares his problems and difficulties while negotiating his source text. He takes his reader into confidence about the precise norms of the methodology used by him. He throws copious hints to show that many texts had corrupt readings and several texts were incomprehensible and as such he had to edit them before he was able to use them. Utility, relevance, authenticity and consistency are his proclaimed norms which he scrupulously adheres to. When he finds his source texts silent, he seeks guidance from the cognate texts from the allied fields, even when he does not subscribe to them.

Few would know, fewer would believe, that Abhinavagupta impacts us as an excellent musician. We do know that he was a philosopher of music. His treatment of the complexities of music, both vocal and instrumental as well as systemal found in the ***Tantrāloka, Abhinavabhāratī*** and ***Īśvarapratyabhijñā vivṛti-vimarśinī***, presents a scientific as well as a philosophical account of music. The merit of Abhinavagupta lies in one more aspect that his ***Abhinavabhāratī*** also comes up an additional and complimentary source of exposition of Bharata's contemporary or Successor, Dattila, a great exponent of Gandharva music. What is more remarkable that he is a great performing artist and ranks at par with Nārada, Udayana and Tumbura in tradition. In a pen-picture drawn by his contemporary and a senior pupil, Madhurāj Yogin, he is portrayed as playing on Nāda-vīṇā[12].

He also impresses as a creative and thoughtful art critic. The way he subjects various poems to critical analysis in the ***Locana, Abhinavabhāratī*** and the fine nuances he brings to bear upon his critical appreciation are landmark in the field of practical

literary criticism. Attention may specially be drawn to his critical analysis of a few verses from Kālidāsa[13] during the course of his build-up of the metapsychology of *rasa* and creative art process involved in the intuitive experience of a connoisseur of art (sahṛdaya) is remarkable for its depth, range and originality and is sure to stay as a model of innovative practical art criticism.

Abhinavagupta defies his categorization among the known classes of Indian philosophers. Philosophy in general is supposed to be a system of thought which offers a rational explanation of the apparent intricacies confronted by us in our understanding of the phenomenal world and also how it paves way for the spiritual realization. Theories of knowledge, reality, relation and value etc. are the natural off-shoots of the metaphysical reasoning. But to Abhinavagupta, philosophy is much more than a more speculative thought, its commitment to life as we live it is deeper and therefore it must be applied to explain those areas also. From metaphysics he transgresses into applied metaphysics. He is the only thinker of his kind who applies his philosophical thesis to the realms of art-experience, dramatic presentation, tantric praxis, yogic transcendental realization of the self and mundane sensual ecstacy specially marking the sex- experience viewing them all as the various expressions of the ultimate self experience, their mutual difference being caused by the specifics of the medium or the instrument employed.

Abhinavagupta as a part of his two-way strategy utilizes these varied experiences as exemplifying and substantiating his metaphysical theses. These constitute a sort of argumentation and support systems establishing the authenticity, validity, tenability and intelligibility of his theories bridging the seeming gulf between the existential, the experiential and the spiritual on the one hand and between the worldly and transworldly on the other. Thus while his metaphysics of recognition offers a most cogent known Indian explanation of the aesthetic experience, the art-experience brings the immediacy of trans-worldly intuitive realization within our reach. According to Abhinavagupta, the art-or aesthetic-experience is self-recognitive experience which reflects fullness of joy because of its freedom from the conditionalities of medium, time and space. In plain words it is an aesthetic rehearsal of spiritual self recognition. This recognitive art-experience is communicated and thereby re-created in the aesthete by employing the suggestive power of language. It should be clear that power of suggestion as developed by Abhinavagupta can be described as a theory of transcendental recognition. Like Bhartṛhari, Abhinavagupta's understanding of the revelatory unity of reference allows us to the higher level of language through *pratibhā* and communication is successfully effected through its revelation (*sphoṭa/dhvani*). Abhinavagupta's description of the Supreme word (*Parāvāc*) as the absolutic self-recognition (*ahaṁpratyavamarśa*) makes it essential to the very structure of experience and thereby again removes the gap

between experience and expression (*rasānubhūti* and *rasābhivyakti*). One cannot miss that the process of rasa-niṣpatti as being concomitant to *rasanā* (*vyaṇjanā*) offers the poetic epistemological argument in support of Abhinavagupta's philosophy of language whereby the self is both revealed and enjoyed. Amongst all art-forms Abhinavagupta accords the highest status to drama because of the analogical character of the Absolutic enactment of the world and the actor's enactment of a character in a drama. As Śiva is portrayed as a cosmic actor (*naṭa/śailūṣa*) and the cosmic arena as a huge dramatic stage where, by assuming roles of individual subjects, He enacts the world-drama and after conclusion gives up the assumed identity and reverts to himself. Thus the myth of the absolutic descent and return to its original being is symbolised by the dramatic art-form where the actor, under the assumed identity becomes a part of the dramatic action and reverts to himself when the drama is over. There is a subtler similarity too. The actor by identifying himself with the focus of dramatic situation, even though enacting an assumed character, experiences the aesthetic relish due to intuitive self realization resulting from the process of universalization (*sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*). The absolute too, likewise, even while discharging the worldly role, has a beatific self-experience due to self recognitive universalization. By substituting dramatic art with ritual and praxis, Abhinavagupta extends application of his theology to the field of tantras. Abhinava attempts philosophical rationalization of the Śaiva monist's central soteriological doctrine of the Absolutic agency symbolically internalized by tantric praxis and rituals (*Kriyā, caryā*) duly re-inforced by his assertion that he himself was conceived in a tantric ritual. In the Kashmir shaivist terminology Śiva is conceived as the supreme agent (*Kartā*) and everything else is his agency or act (*Kriyā*). The tantric phraseology replaces it by the paradigm of the `powerful' and the `power' (*Śaktiman & Śakti*). The world is nothing but the self-actualization of the *Śaktiman* through its own agency in the phase of expansion (which is also a literal meaning of the term `tantra') and reabsorption of the world within self by deactivating the agency. The plethora of tantric practices and rituals are the tantric enunciation of the divine functionalism by undertaking which the Godhead unfolds and enfolds itself. The situation bears close analogy to the aforesaid dramatic performance. We reach this tantric unity of Śiva and Śakti by another route also. The overall pattern of the spiritual practices corresponding to the broad tantric mythical structure is the recourse to the sexual rituals, physically and alternatively by mental visualization, to manifest or reintegrate "the cosmogonic sexual unity of Śiva and Śakti.[14]. The fundamental thrust of the argument consists in the adept's achieving complete identification with Śiva in the enjoyment of the world as Śakti, both as his `power' as well as `consort'. The various rites comprising *caryākrama, rahasyāprakriyā* or *adiyagā* (primal rite) are typical examples of such tantric praxis. The homology between the dramatic experience and the tantric experience of the self lies in the role of

Śakti or agency which consists in self-referential integration or self-recognitive awareness where connoisseur of art (*sahṛdaya*) or the actor (*naṭa/anukartā*) is akin to Śiva and his experiencing capacity to *pratibhā* or intuitive power (*Śakti*) which is nothing but the self-referential awareness. In this extended sense the sexual experience includes all the sensual experiences, their self-sublimating or self-refining potential being constituted by Śakti or power. Thus intrinsic nature of aesthetic, sexual are sensual experiences are homologous to and practically approximate to the monistic Śaiva soteriological realization.

The greatest feature of Abhinavan contribution lies not in his extreme originality, nor in his capacity to rise way above the past tradition or break with the tradition, but in his contemporaenity and futuristic potential towards opening up new vista for Indian thinking.

While taking stock of the social margins of the Abhinavan thought vis-a-vis contemporary content and futuristic expectations our attention is arrested by five important features of his approach-

(a) out of the two basic strands of Indian thought - analytical (*adhyavasāyātmaka*) and synthetical (*anusaṁdhānātmaka*). Abhinavagupta sides with the latter. The process of analysis implies an excluvist (*vyāvṛttimulaka*) or negative approach towards life, devaluing its value, opting for cognition which is based on 'pick and choose' selectivity and dividing society in compartments of language, caste, creed and gender. As against this the process of synthesis is based on life-affirmation, recognizing life as a value, embracing re-cognition on unilocality of time and space and advocating inclusivism (*anuvṛtti*) rejecting artificial pegion-holes of humanity created by caste, creed, gender and language. According to Abhinavagupta those who subscribe or sympathize with the social fragmentation are bent upon insulting the Divine and are prone to make themselves laughing stock.[15]. This idea of Abhinavagupta is buttressed from another source of his. His metapsychological enunciation of the process of universalization (*sādhāraṇīkaraṇa*) in the artistic consummation is a bold statement of such a radical reasoning.

(b) Abhinavagupta's life-embracing approach is a direct outflow from his doctrine of totality and complete integration (*pūrṇatā/sāmarasya*) which is reflected in the ecclectical value-structuing and acceptance of all finite truths as human truths. This is indicative of Abhinavagupta's fundamental belief in the possibility of countless modes of the ultimate Reality's manifestation. Abhinavagupta's direct student, Kṣemarāja gives an exquisite vent to it in his famous aphorism.[16].

(c) Abhinavagupta joins the main stream tantricism in projecting `power' as the special theme of the tantric myth, symbolism and practice. The entire tantric ritual mechanism is geared to realize this `power'. Through ideological rationalization, the sole direction of the cognitive activity, which is recognitive per se is said to discover/ rediscover this power[17] and that of agential activity (*kartṛtā*) is to actualize this `power' at the level of experience. By valuation of power over other considerations in our thought and conduct both, a stage is set to elevate human independence or self-instrumentality towards energizing inherent potential.

(d) Abhinavagupta's equation of microcosm with the macrocosm, of *yogin* with *Parama Śiva*, of the individual consciousness with the universal consciousness is obviously aimed at viewing the man as an end in himself and thereby paying the way for exploring the ultimate possibilities of his growth.

(e) Abhinavagupta views the mundane as an extension of the transmundane or the Divine. His total being is fully disposed towards discovering a deep mutual level of dependence between the objects. This procivlity consists in innate realization of the basic unity inherent in the diversity. Abhinavagupta has repeatedly declared that this world of discourse marked by unity-in diversity carves out gatway to the spiritual awakening.[18].

Laced with the foregoing overview of Abhinavan theology and its quintessential premises a modern student of Abhinavagupta will instantly catch hold of a fertile ground in Abhinavagupta towards reconstructing a new system of Indian thought whose immediate central concern will be to transgress the artificial barriers eroding the social cohesion, to uphold the cause of `power' as a real tool of exercising one's agential freedom, to offer a congenial atmosphere for achieving ongoing divination of man and, in the sum total, for attaining a joyous existence as the celebration of life.

Before winding up attention must be drawn towards political significance of no mean order of Abhinavan contribution. Kashmir constitutes a burning test of our secular credentials and Hindu-Muslim unity. If we fail to retain Kashmir, we loose the battle of secular Indian polity. The best of kashmir is embodied in and represented by Abhinavagupta. As the tradition has it, his birth in Kashmir was by his own compassionate choice. [19] it is, therefore, our sacred duty not to allow Abhinavagupta to die in the land of his birth.

With the foregoing statement of rationale, I invite the scholarly world to re-access and re-assess Abhinavagupta for answering our basic concerns of cultural identity, secular commitment, nodal centrality of Indological persuits and divining a fresh socio-philosophical thinking with contemporary humanistic ethos.

References :

1. Paper entitled "contribution of kashmir to Philosophy, Thought & culture" read at the International Sanskrit Conference, New Delhi, 1972, Proceedings, Vol.1, Part I, pp. 258-266. Later published in ABORI, Vol, 1975.

2. In people's mind, down the passage of history, Kashmir was perceived as the citadel of the Goddess of Learning and a testing ground of the persons claiming to be the scholars. As Jayaratha rightly observes in one of the closing verses of his Tantrāloka-vīveka (verse No. 4)

   युक्ता बोधप्रधाना स्थितनिजमहसा शारदा पीठदेवी।
   विद्यापीठे प्रथीयः प्रथितनिखिलवाग्यत्र काश्मीरनाम्नि॥

3. Abhinavagupta : An Historical & Philosophical Study, P. 10-11

4. Ibid.

5. श्रीमान्नः पातु साक्षादभिनवपुषा दक्षिणामूर्तिदेवः। Gurunāthaparāmarśa, Verse No. 4

6. तादृङ्मेलककलिकाकलिततनुः कोऽपि यो भवेद्गर्भे।
   उक्तः स योगिनीभूः स्वयमेव ज्ञानभाजनं रुद्रः।
   Tantrāloka 29.162-63. Also see Tantrāloka-viveka, VIII, p.137

7. अभिषिक्तः स्वसंवित्तिदेवीभिर्दीक्षितश्च सः। Tantrāloka, 4.42-43

8. अभिनवगुप्तस्य इति सकललोकप्रसिद्धनामोदीरणेनापि आप्तत्वमेव उपोदवलितम्
   Tantrāloka-viveka, Vol.I, p. 34

9. अभिनवगुप्तस्य कृतिः सेयं यस्योदिता गुरुभिराख्या।
   त्रिनयनचरणसरोरुह चिन्तनलब्धप्रसिद्धिरिति। Tantrāloka, 1.20

10. सूत्रं वृत्तिर्विवृत्तिर्लघ्वी बृहतीत्युभे विमर्शिन्यौ।
    प्रकरणविवरणपञ्चकमितिशास्त्रं प्रत्यभिज्ञायाः॥
    Sarva-darśana Saṁgraha (chapter on Pratyabhijñā), p.349

11. A study of these stotras and other minor devotional works was done by me way back in 1959 while presenting a dissertation for my postgraduate degree. Later Lila Silburn also published a work on these in France.

12. वामश्रीपाणिपद्मस्फुरितनखमुखैर्वादयन्नादवीणाम् । Gurunāthaparāmarśa, verse No. 4

13. ग्रीवाभङ्गाभिरामं मुहुरनुपतति स्यन्दने बद्धदृष्टिः .... Abhijñāna Śākuntalam, 1.7
    रम्याणि वीक्ष्य मधुरांश्च निशम्य शब्दान् Ibid, 5.2
    हरस्तु किञ्चित्परिलुप्तधैर्यः चन्द्रोदयारम्भ इवाम्बुराशेः। Kumāra-sambhavam, 3.67

14. Arguments and the Recognition of Siva, David Peter lawrence, p.38.

15. तेहि भगवत: सर्वानुग्राहिकां शक्तिं मितविषयतया खण्डयन्त: तथा परमेश्वरस्य परमकृपालुत्वमसहमाना:, भगवत्तत्त्वे भेदलिङ्गं बलादेवानयन्त:, मात्सर्यावहित्थलज्जा-जिह्मीकृतावाङ्मुखदृष्ट्य इति हास्यरसविषयभावम् आत्मनि आरोपयन्ति इति।
Bhagvadgitārthaśaṁgraha on Gīta 9.35

16. तद्भूमिका: सर्वदर्शनस्थितय:। Pratyabhijñā-hṛdayam, Sūtra 8

17. स्वशक्त्याविष्करणेनेयं प्रत्यभिज्ञोपदर्श्यते। Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-kārikā, 1.1

18. सर्वथा तावदत्र प्रमेये भगवत एव भेदने च अभेदने च स्वातन्त्र्यं घटगताभासभेदाभेददृष्टिरेव परमार्थाद्वयदृष्टिप्रवेशे उपाय: समवलम्बनीय:, न तु व्यवहारोऽपि अयं परमेश्वरस्वरूपानुप्रवेशविरोधी।
Īśvara-pratyabhijñā-vimarśinī, II, p. 129

19. श्रीकण्ठेशावतार: परमकरुणया प्राप्तकाश्मीरदेश:। Gurunāthaparāmarśa, Verse No. 4

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3. **Arguments and the Recognition of Śiva : The Philosophical Theology of utpala Deva and Abhinavagupta** — David Peter lawrence, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1992.

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